

Japan Objects to Tough New

By Rafael Steinberg

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TOKYO — Tough new American criticism of Japanese attitudes and policies has provoked an official response here as tensions mount between the two allies.

A spokesman for the Japanese Foreign Office, Akira Sono, accused the U.S. Government and the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo of paying too much attention to "specific leftist critics and Japanese newspapers" in making their assessment of Japanese public opinion.

Sono referred to a speech of U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs William Bundy.

Japanese opinion is not accurately reflected by mass media and the remarks of "certain scholars," Sono said. He declared that the majority of Japanese are not worried that Vietnam may lead to a major war and do not blame the United States for the escalation of the conflict.

Sees 'Other Opinions'

"I have no intention of criticizing Mr. Bundy or the American Embassy," Sono told a group of foreign newsmen. "But I would point out that when they make an assessment of Japanese public opinions are other opinions besides those of special persons and the Japanese press." By "special persons," Sono made it clear he was referring to intellectuals of the Japanese left.

Sono was objecting to a speech Bundy made on Oct. 30 in New York.

Addressing the 28th American Assembly at Arden House, Bundy complained that Japan has "virtually no interest in sharing responsibility for the military defense of the Pacific area." Japanese economic assistance to South Asia, Bundy said "has primarily

Criticism by U.S.

taken the form of . . . loans tied directly to Japan's commercial interests."

Pointing out that Japan's economic growth had been made possibly by American military protection, Bundy declared that "there seems to be a tendency, even in Japanese conservative circles, to accord the Chinese Communist the same tolerance that is given to student radicals in Japan, in the expectation that they will outgrow their excesses and settle down as responsible members of the community."

He termed as "dangerously wrong" Japanese public attitudes critical of the U.S. role in Vietnam.

Foreign Office Annoyed

These remarks plainly annoyed the Foreign Office. Contrary to usual practice, Sono opened his news conference with a long statement endeavoring to refute the generally accepted view that Japanese public opinion opposes U.S. Vietnam policy.

As evidence, he cited his own recent encounter with an audience of 50 "ordinary people," of whom only one said he was worried about Vietnam leading to nuclear conflict. And he read off the latest results of a monthly poll which showed no change in the long-standing findings that more people in Japan list America as their favorite foreign country than they do any other land.

Sono conceded that some Japanese conservatives are "indulgent" toward Peking. But he added that in his opinion "even these people have changed their ideas

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about the Asian situation in the last two months."

Referring to official Japanese government support of U.S. policies, Sono said that the majority of the people also understand and appreciate what the United States is doing. "Otherwise," he said, "we would be led to the ridiculous conclusion that there is a difference of opinion between the Japanese government and the people."

How "ridiculous" this conclusion may be can perhaps be judged by another nation-wide poll, taken in August, that showed that 41 per cent of Japanese questioned thought that a Vietcong victory would not affect Japan or other Asian nations, and only 17 per cent believed that such a victory would lead to the communization of other Asian lands. Furthermore, 57 per cent feared that a major war in which Japan might become involved could develop from the Vietnam conflict.

Appears to Be Reaction

Whether the Foreign Office actually holds the views expressed by Sono, or whether Sono was merely trying to mollify American opinion with a statement "for ex-

port only," the incident appeared to be a reaction to a "lay-it-on-the-line" policy of the United States.

U.S. Ambassador Edwin

O. Reischauer first displayed the new U.S attitude toward America's Japanese critics in a speech in Osaka in September in which he blasted Japanese newspa-

pers for swallowing North Vietnamese propaganda whole.

Other American officials here have indicated that the United States has decided to

cease being "ultrasensitive to Japanese sensibilities."

Bundy's Arden House talk appeared to be another blunt attempt to alert Japan to the dangers U.S. officials feel she is ignoring.

Foreign Office disclaimers notwithstanding, some of America's long-time friends—men who have on occasion been vilified for their support of free world principles—are now openly

disturbed about events in Vietnam and worried about the future of Japanese-American relations.

One of these is Shigeharu Matsumoto, head of the International House of Japan,

who is now on a speaking tour of the United States. In an article published this month in Japan, in the form of an open letter to an anonymous American friend, Matsumoto reports that

"Japanese public opinion is becoming more and more critical of America's Vietnam policy, just as the American side's sense of impatience toward Japan is increasing."